

STORMY WEATHER: Irene blasts Duxbury

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Monday morning, skies were clear, the sun was shining and the sounds of chainsaws rending wood echoed over Duxbury as residents worked to clean up the aftermath of Tropical Storm Irene.

Irene may have lost some teeth as it was downgraded

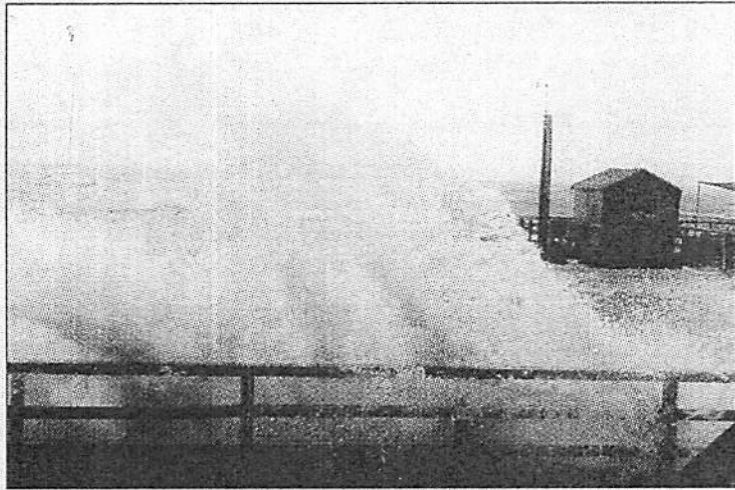
from a category 1 hurricane to a tropical storm, but Duxbury was still slammed with severe winds. Downed trees and branches knocked down power lines and made roads impassable.

Selectman Chairman Shawn Dahlen moors a boat in Marion harbor, and after

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ABOVE: Two boats, including this one, sank in Duxbury Harbor during Tropical Storm Irene. After two calls from the harbormaster, all but 16 of the 600 boats moored in the harbor were pulled onto shore.



LEFT: Waves crash over the railing at the Duxbury Yacht Club during the storm on Sunday.

Tropical Storm Irene packs

Wednesday, August 31, 2011

a wet wallop

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the storm he drove down to check on it. (Dahlen's boat was not the one shown breaking away from its moorings over and over again on TV news during the storm.) Although the South Coast was predicted to take the worst beating from Irene's howling winds, he says Duxbury was hit hard.

"We have more damage here than every town I drove through," Dahlen said.

South Shore residents were warned that they would see more wind while points west would see more rain, a prediction that proved true. Wind gusts of 62 miles per hour were recorded at the Pine Hills in Plymouth, according to the National Weather Service. Rainfalls were much less severe than in the western part of the state — .76 inches, according to the NWS Web site. The region near Deerfield got soaked, with nearly 10 inches of rain falling.

The biggest problem in the immediate aftermath of Irene was power. The entire town was dark until Monday, and even then only a few places were restored.

As of 7 p.m. Monday night, nearly 90 percent of Duxbury was without power — 5,833 of 6,484 customers, according to the NSTAR Web site.

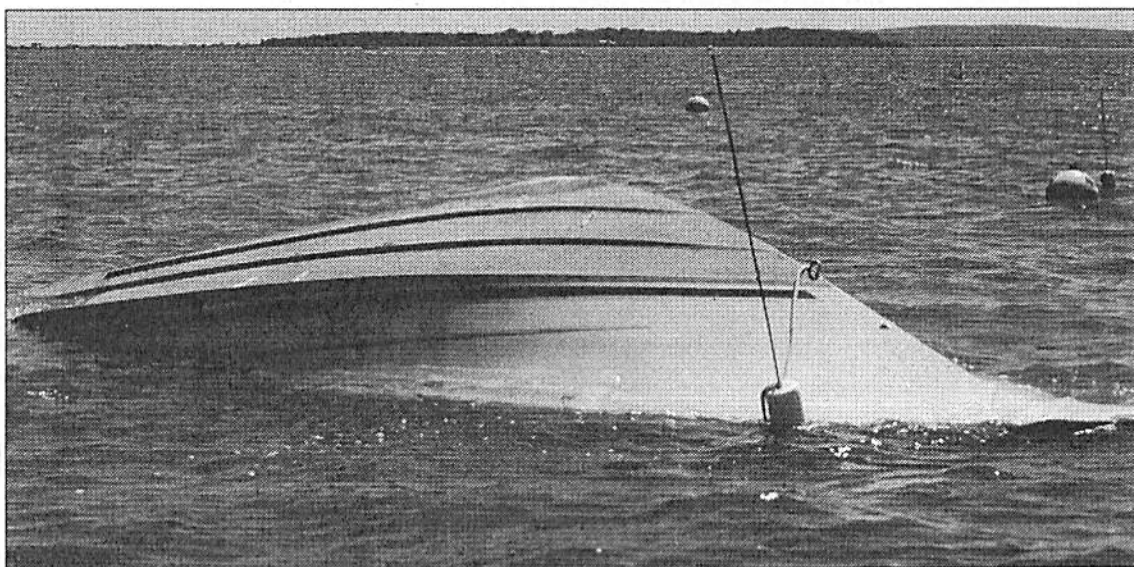
"Due to the extent of the damage and the large number of customers affected, many NSTAR customers currently without power could be out for several days," the Web site read.

DPW Director Peter Buttus said the town did what it could to clear trees and limbs from roads, but their hands are tied when a tree is resting on a power line, or if the line has broken and fallen into the road.

"We can't touch them until NSTAR clears them," he said.

Buttkus said all the closed or partially blocked roads as of Monday involved wires, but that list was still over a dozen names long.

"The damage is so extensive that in many places, we essentially have to re-build the electric system so we can restore power to customers," said Werner Schweiger, NSTAR's



This boat in Duxbury harbor had completely flipped over.

senior vice president of operations said in a press release Monday.

Standish Shore was also hit particularly hard by the storm.

"By 11 a.m. we'd already lost power; it was off and on all day," said Madeleine Castanon, 12, walking her dog along Marshall Street Monday afternoon. She said the worst of the storm was between 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

"This is definitely the longest we've been without power," she added. "Just to get to the center of town, there's four wires down."

Castanon said her family secured the grill and took in some furniture, but other than that didn't do anything out of the ordinary to prepare for the storm.

Down at Duxbury Harbor, Harbormaster Don Beers was happy to see that all but 16 of the 600 boats in the water were removed by their owners. He put in two reverse 911 calls to everyone with a mooring during the course of the day – the first warning boat owners to watch the weather, the second advising everyone to get their boats out (Duxbury does not

make boat removal mandatory.)

"The whole concept is being prepared," Beers said. "And that means staying out of the way."

Once it became clear that boats needed to be pulled, Harbormaster personnel helped organize traffic, backing trailers into the water and helping residents bring up their boats.

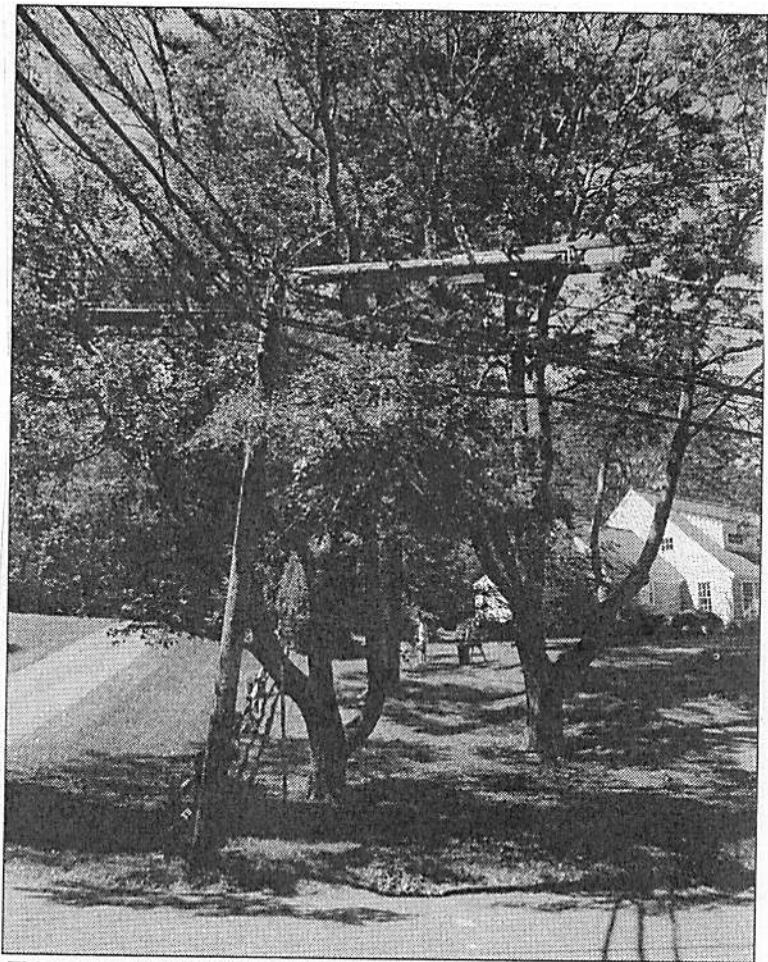
"The word of that day was, get it out," Beers said. "The coast of Duxbury is not a safe harbor for boats during a hurricane."

Unfortunately, two boats that were not pulled out of the bay sank at their moorings, and the docks at the Duxbury Yacht Club took some damage. But overall, Beers was please with the way his staff, and residents, reacted.

"Everyone reacted to the storm superbly," he said.

It wasn't just boaters who had to prepare for the storm. Duxbury Bay is home to many oyster beds, and the floating shacks that normally dot the harbor were pulled into the Blue Fish river to protect them from the storm, at the advice of the Harbormaster.

"This is the storm plan for



This utility pole at Standish and Marshall streets was snapped in half by high wind gusts that buffeted Standish Shore.

us," said Mike George, untying his floats on Monday morning. George said he and other oystermen had plenty of advance warning of the storm. "I knew Tuesday of last week."

The relatively protected cove at the Blue Fish River near the Harbormaster's shed protected the floats from damage. But not all the equipment could be so carefully pulled into shore.

"This is fine, but what's out with the crop? We'll find out in a little bit," George said.

Although town offices had no power, town officials bunkered down in the Emergency Operations Center at the Tremont Street Fire Station. Power there was provided by a generator, and people came in to get power for serious medical needs — like a woman who came in to do a nebulizer treatment — and more mundane tasks like charging cell phones.

Fire Chief Kevin Nord said that his department had responded to 245 incidents between Sunday and Monday, from trees striking houses — and even a case of a tree falling on a car with people inside — to medical calls. During the storm itself Sunday the Coun-

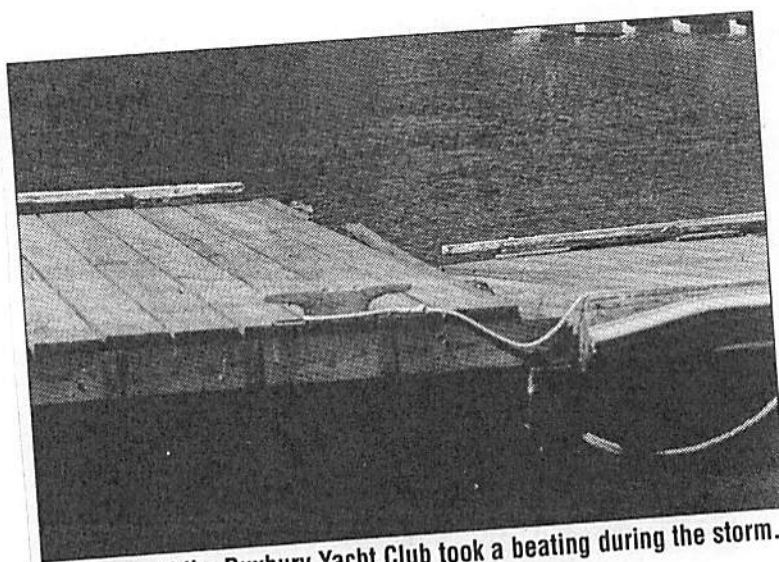
cil on Aging was opened as an emergency shelter, and into Monday residents who needed it were encouraged to take shelter at the Furnace Brook Elementary School in Marshfield.

Residents were encouraged to remember that just because the skies have cleared, the danger from the storm isn't over. Buttkus asked residents to call if they believe a leaning or damaged tree is in danger of falling on power lines or homes, and he asked everyone to stay away from power lines — even if they appeared to have no electricity.

"Never assume the line is dead," he said.

The storm has not affected the opening schedule for the Duxbury Public Schools, although teachers lost a professional day on Monday. Students will report on Thursday, Sept. 1.

At about 4 p.m. Tuesday, NSTAR officials said there were still 1,531 people without power in Duxbury, about 23 percent of customers. The utility estimated that power would be fully restored to the town by 10 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 3.



The docks at the Duxbury Yacht Club took a beating during the storm.